

in the fight for social and economic justice.

A tireless defender of democracy and human rights, Mr. Aguilar Zinser will be remembered as a true patriot, a true fighter for his country, and a friend to so many of us.

In recognition of his outstanding and valuable service to Mexico, I want to offer my deepest sympathies to his family and to his many friends around the world.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### UNCOVER DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROBLEMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House of Representatives under suspension of the rules, that is, a bill with 40 minutes of debate total, no amendments allowed by any Member of the House for any reason, will vote to borrow on behalf of all the American people \$51.8 billion to begin the recovery, rebuilding and continuing the aid and assistance efforts subsequent to the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

Now, it is good that we are reacting and we are going to begin to fund the incredible needs that will arise and have arisen from this disaster. It is the beginning of a long process, and it is probably only a down payment. But some say that we cannot, as the House of Representatives or the legislative branch, examine the causes of the miserable response that caused unnecessary loss of life while recovery efforts are still ongoing.

Some say that we cannot question the work done by the administration and the appointees in place who failed to act adequately. They say that would be unseemly.

But during World War II, Harry Truman, in a Democratic-controlled legislature, chaired a special committee investigating the procurement scandals of a Democratic administration in the greatest crisis of our history, World War II.

We can do both. We can provide aid and assistance, and we can get at the root causes of unnecessary loss of life and unnecessary disaster. We can do that.

There are a number of lessons to be learned. We need to be able to respond better today or tomorrow. Hurricane season is not over yet. We might have another. Another might follow tragically that same path. That might be an incredible disaster. And we are going to have the same people in place, the same procedures in place. That is not going to be enough.

The terrorists are not going to wait. It has been 4 years since 9/11. We still do not have interoperable, secure communications that were identified as a principal problem on 9/11. The Bush administration zeroed them out in this year's budget, and the Congress has not yet seen fit to restore that money. I hope they will do that in one of these emergency spending bills.

Then there are the cuts at FEMA. The aggregate budget for FEMA during the term of the Bush administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has been reduced. We are not quite sure how much yet because we do not have the final numbers on this bill. I guess with this disaster assistance that will not be the case. But in terms of their preparedness and mitigation, it has been reduced.

The Corps of Engineers has hundreds of critical infrastructure problems, including the levee around New Orleans, underfunded and unfunded. I had a dam in my district that was failing, a flood control dam, with the largest cities in the State downstream. And the Corps of Engineers simply said, We do not have the money. Finally they scrambled around and they found the money. But, unfortunately, they were not able to do that in New Orleans for the Corps budget had been dramatically reduced.

□ 1800

In fact, the Corps' own people predicted that this could happen because of the underfunding of the ongoing maintenance and the needed improvements in the diking system there, but all's well.

Deputy Press Secretary Trent Duffy said things are on track to privatize Social Security because we are going to borrow so much money for the disaster we are going to need to privatize Social Security. What? The Bush plan for privatization of Social Security requires borrowing more money. That is absurd. Then he says, oh, and the tax cuts are all on track, too. The tax cuts for the wealthiest among us are on track in face of a war and a disaster. Why? Because trickle-down will help the people of New Orleans.

How about Federal investment in the infrastructure that would protect the people of New Orleans and other cities around the United States of America? How about interoperable communications for our first responders across the United States of America? How about more money for disaster mitigation preparedness for FEMA? How about those investments before tax cuts for the wealthiest among us?

But they live on the high ground, and I guess they think they are exempt. They are not exempt. We are all in this together, and there should be some degree of sacrifice and level-headedness downtown. We are going to borrow \$52.8 billion tomorrow, adding to the deficit; and they are proposing more tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year and estates over \$6 million.

Come on, let us get real. Let us act on behalf of all our people. Let us in-

vest in our country and our people and do a better job against natural disasters and the potential for terrorist attacks. We need some changes. It should be more than 40 minutes of debate, and one or two amendments at least should be allowed.

#### HIGH FUEL PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that most Members spent time touring their districts in August, and I did as well. The major complaint that I heard was what probably most Members heard. That was concern about high fuel prices. We all know that fuel for automobiles, trucks, and airplanes have simply gone out of sight. One thing that we are not probably quite as aware of as a Nation is what it has done to agriculture, particularly where irrigation is concerned.

I talked to one Member of Congress who does some farming and irrigating. He was telling me that he had one center pivot that was powered by electricity; it cost him \$1,000. He had one center pivot that was powered by either diesel or propane; that was \$4,000. Same pivot, same size, and normally electricity would be higher than diesel or propane. So fuel has really eaten into the farm profits this year, and it is going to make farming very unprofitable for many people.

What has happened? Obviously, one major issue has been that global demand has increased. We realize that China, India, countries like these, have been industrialized, and over the last 4, 5, 6 years have been using much more fuel.

Number two, exploration has been curtailed. A 1998 executive order extended a moratorium on offshore drilling for 10 years. It is assumed that these areas would contain 75 billion barrels of oil and 362 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, but they are off limits. Federal law restricts access to resources in the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico. Drilling in ANWR has not been allowed; and so whichever side of the environmental fence you are on, whether you agree or disagree, it certainly has made it more difficult to meet our fuel demands. Natural gas prices have increased 83 percent over the last 3 years, and this will cost our economy roughly \$111 billion, and a lot of this is simply because of a shortage of natural gas, at least that is available to us; and we have a tremendous amount of it in Alaska and other places we are not able to get to.

Number three, refinery capacity has been reduced due to obsolescence. As a refinery gets old and equipment begins to go downhill, rather than being replaced, it simply is retired; and we have lost 30 percent of our refinery capacity since 1976. For the last 30 years,